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Five Yanks Died Training Cubans

Reveal Guard Pilots Aided Exiles for Bay of Pigs

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A retired Air Force officer says five Alabama Air National Guard pilots were killed while training Cuban exiles for the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion.

May Gen. David W. Hutchinson added that he believes a single U.S. jet fighter probably could have made the 1961 invasion of Cuba a success.

Hutchinson said in Oklahoma City Thursday night that Brig. Gen.



GEN. DOSTER

G. Reed Doster, commander of the Alabama Air National Guard, informed him of the impending invasion. At the time Hutchinson commanded the 9th Tactical Air Force and the Alabama unit was under his supervision.

Hutchinson, now an oilman, said Doster asked if he and about a dozen of his B-26 pilots

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could take leave to go out of the country.

"Gen. Doster said they'd been hired by the Central Intelligence Agency," Hutchinson said. Doster and his men took leave on civilian status.

When Doster returned Hutchinson said, "he was heartbroken. Five of his men had been killed, and all of their efforts went up in the air in a matter of minutes."

DOSTER, contacted in Montgomery, Ala., said he would only discuss his role in the invasion with a congressional committee.

Hutchinson said one fight-

er pilot could have covered the B-26s so they could have bombed tanks which helped smash the invaders.

No qualified military commander would think of sending unarmed B-26s without air cover where there were jet fighter interceptors," Hutchinson said, "and we had reasonable cause to believe the Cubans had jet fighters."

IN ATLANTA, an American pilot said that when the Cuban invasion failed, a plan was proposed for a fake attack on the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo to give our forces an excuse to enter the fighting.

"I don't think it was taken seriously," said Albert C. Persons, 47, a Birmingham, Ala., weekly newspaper editor. "It was transmitted to Washington as suggestion for a way to save this thing (the invasion), by whatever authority, I don't know."

Persons, a World War II hero, said he was recruited for the April, 1961, invasion and was in Nicaragua organizing air strikes against Cuba when it became obvious the thing had fallen completely to pieces.

At that point, Persons said, one of the American pilots suggested that two or three planes already painted with Cuban markings fly to Guantanamo and strafe runways or other sections of the base. "By a last pre-arrangement" with Guantanamo, Persons said, base personnel would be removed to safety before the staged attack.

"This was a very cynical approach to the problem, but as far as the rest of the world is concerned it would have been believable," he said.

PERSONS, first cousin to Gen. W. B. Persons, former President Dwight D. Eisenhower's military aide, contended the invasion would have succeeded if Premier Fidel Castro hadn't been given time to muster his forces after the first air strike.

He said he believed "someone" called a 48-hour delay in the invasion after the first air strike on Cuban targets on April 15. The next air attack was on April 18, the day after the invasion.

"The effect of this 48 hours was obviously to give Castro 48 hours to disperse his aircraft, his tanks, his troops and to prepare for an invasion he had been expecting for many months," said Persons.